



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Policy Manual

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Purpose:

This issuance establishes policy and procedure related to Case Goals, which define and guide Division activities in its provision of services to each child and each family member open for services, and to guide activities toward the achievement of the child's permanent living arrangement.

Policy:

A) Generally

- a) At the time of service delivery, select one of the following case goals for each child, and one for each family member receiving services
 - a) Maintenance in Own Home - Family Stabilization;
 - b) Reunification (Return Home); Note: Selecting this as the primary goal requires you to select a secondary permanency goal and immediately begin to plan concurrently for reunification and an alternate permanent living arrangement for the child. See [CP&P-III-B-2-300](#).
 - c) Adoption;
 - d) Kinship Legal Guardianship (KLG);
 - e) Independent Living;
 - f) Other Long-Term Specialized Care;
 - g) Individual Stabilization.

- b) The case goal(s) is recorded in the New Jersey SPIRIT (NJS) computerized system, and pre-fills the CP&P [Form 26-81](#), Family Summary/Case Plan, when printed.

B) Maintenance in Own Home – Family Stabilization

Select Family Stabilization as the goal for a child and his or her parents or caregivers when directing case management activities and service provision toward:

- a) Keeping a child in his or her home (i.e., with the person or persons with whom he or she normally resides, regardless of the child's biological or legal ties to that person or persons) when the circumstances do not necessitate removal from the home.
- b) Keeping the child in the home to which he or she was returned or placed following out-of-home placement, regardless of the child's biological or legal ties to the person or persons, when reunification with the parent(s) has been ruled out.

C) Reunification

- a) Select this case goal for the parent(s) and child when the child is in any type of substitute care. Case activities are directed toward safely returning the child to, or placing the child with, a parent when the circumstances necessitating out-of-home placement have been resolved, and the parent has expressed an interest in, and displayed the willingness and ability to, care for the child, with support services, if necessary.
 - i) Four sub-goals indicate to whom the child will be returned:
 - 1. Reunification with parent from whom removed;
 - 2. Reunification with other parent;
 - 3. Reunification with relative from whom removed;
 - 4. Reunification with family friend from whom removed.
 - ii) Examples of circumstances where Reunification may not be the primary goal:
 - 1. The parent(s) shows evidence of characteristics that are chronic and severely impede his or her ability to provide adequate care for the child, such as:
 - i) **Chronic Psychosis;**
 - ii) **Substance Use Disorder;**
 - iii) **Developmental Disability;**
 - iv) **Severe Personality Disorder.**
 - 2. The parent(s) has killed or seriously injured a previous child.

3. The parent(s) has had his or her parental rights to previous children terminated by the courts and the circumstances of the parent(s) have not changed.
4. The parent(s) has sexually abused a child, or allowed a child to be sexually abused, and the parent(s) has refused or failed to benefit from help. (If at least one parent in the household is able to adequately protect the child, the prognosis for reunification is somewhat better.)
5. The parent(s) has a history of severe or chronic child neglect and has failed to use or benefit from social services or other appropriate help.
6. The parent(s) has failed to implement or to cooperate with previous reunification plans.
7. The parent(s) has shown a pattern of long term or repeated incarceration which resulted in placement of the child.
8. The parent(s) places a child in resource family care at birth and demonstrably lacks family or friends willing to rear the child.
9. The child has serious problems (medical/developmental disabilities, emotional difficulties) that the parent(s) can neither understand nor adequately cope with, despite professional efforts to improve parental care.
10. The child is clearly and substantially abandoned by the parent(s), as in the case of a foundling (see [CP&P-II-C-5-700](#)), a Safe Haven infant (see [CP&P-IV-C-5-100](#)), or an infant left at the hospital following birth (i.e., a "boarder baby").

D) Adoption

- 1) Adoption is the legal transfer of all parental rights and responsibilities from the birth and/or legal parent to another person who desires to assume those rights and responsibilities.
 - a) Select adoption as a goal when Maintenance in Own Home - Family Stabilization or Reunification have been ruled out, because:
 - i) Parents/relatives/family friends are unknown or cannot be located;
 - ii) Parents/relatives/family friends are unable or unwilling to provide care and/or protection for the child;
 - b) Adoption may be selected as a case goal at the time of initial placement when:

- i) The child is a Safe Haven infant.
 - ii) The parent(s) has signed a CP&P [Form 14-86](#), Surrender of Custody and Consent for Adoption.
 - iii) The parents are deceased, unknown, or cannot be located after the completion of a legal search. See [CP&P-III-C-4-100](#) for policy on locating missing birth parents.
- c) Adoption may be selected at the permanency hearing, which is not contingent upon the court's agreement with the plan.
 - i) NJS tip: The results of the permanency hearing must be documented in the Legal Status Window after the permanency hearing and independent of the adoption/permanency plan, which may be updated at a later date.
- d) The Adoption case goal is divided into six sub-goals:
 - i) Adoption - Relative: The child is to be adopted by a person(s) to whom he or she is related by blood or marriage/civil union, with or without subsidy.
 - ii) Adoption - Family Friend: This sub-goal refers to the child who is to be adopted by a family friend with whom the child has a significant emotional attachment, with or without subsidy.
 - iii) Adoption - Foster Home: The child is to be adopted by his or her resource family parents, who are not related by blood or marriage/civil union.
 - iv) Adoption - Selected Home: The child is to be adopted by a family studied and approved by a licensed adoption agency.
 - v) Adoption - Type of Placement Not Yet Decided: This sub goal must be updated when the type of adoption placement is determined.
 - vi) Adoption Complaint Investigation (ACI): For children placed by an entity that is not a New Jersey licensed adoption agency. The court has ordered CP&P to conduct an investigation and submit a report concerning the circumstances of the placement. (This goal may be used in KLG disruptions.)
 - 1. NJS TIP: The Safe Measures report, "Adoption Goals (By Goal Type)," found under the Concurrent Planning category, identifies all children in an out-of-home placement during the selected month with a goal of adoption. Children are grouped together by goal type.

E) Kinship Legal Guardianship (KLG)

- 1) N.J.S.A. 3B:12A-2 provides the following definition: "Kinship legal guardian" means a caregiver who is willing to assume care of a child due to parental incapacity, with the intent to raise the child to adulthood, and who is appointed the kinship legal guardian of the child by the court. This person shall be responsible for the care and protection of the child and for providing for the child's health, education and maintenance.
- 2) KLG is intended to be permanent and self-sustaining, as evidenced by the transfer of certain parental rights to the caregiver, while the parent retains the right to consent to adoption, an obligation to pay child support, and the right to have ongoing contact with the child. This case goal is only applicable to a child.
- 3) Before the KLG decision can be made for a legally free child or a child placed with a non-kin caregiver, the approval of the Area Director is required. KLG sub-goals include:
 - a) Kinship Legal Guardianship with a relative - The child is to be placed permanently with a person to whom he or she is related by blood or marriage/civil union who is licensed and with whom he or she has been living consistently for at least the last six (6) consecutive months or nine (9) of the last 15 months.
 - b) Kinship Legal Guardianship with a family friend - The child is to be placed permanently with a family friend (not related to the child by blood or marriage/civil union) who is licensed and with whom he or she has been living consistently for at least the last six (6) consecutive months or nine (9) of the last 15 months, and who has a positive psychological or emotional relationship with the child.
 - c) Kinship Legal Guardianship with a resource family parent - The child is to be placed permanently with a resource family parent who is licensed and with whom he or she has been living consistently for at least the last six (6) consecutive months or nine (9) of the last 15 months, and with whom the child has developed a positive psychological or emotional relationship.

F) Independent Living

- 1) The permanency goal of Independent Living is only appropriate for adolescents 16 to 18 years of age, when there is absolutely no alternative as follows:
 - a) Select the case goal of Independent Living when case activities are directed toward the achievement and maintenance of an adolescent in a living arrangement that allows him or her to eventually function on his or

her own. See [CP&P-VI-B-1-300](#), Adolescent Services Toward Self-Sufficiency, and [CP&P-VI-A-2-200](#), Independent Living.

- b) Independent Living is only applicable for an adolescent who is preparing for adult life and who meets all of the following criteria, with reunification with parents being ruled out by:
 - i) Prior and repeated failure of all reunification efforts;
 - ii) Family's refusal to cooperate with reunification efforts.
- c) Adoption has been ruled out because:
 - i) The adolescent is unable to emotionally attach to another family, as supported by professional evaluation.
 - ii) The adolescent has expressed an unwillingness to be adopted, either verbally or through failed adoption attempts.
 - iii) The adolescent's relationship to the birth family is significant to his or her identity and well-being.
 - iv) No appropriate adoption homes are available.
- d) Kinship Legal Guardianship has been ruled out by:
 - i) Relatives and family friends who may be involved in the adolescent's life are unable or unwilling to provide direct care for the adolescent.
 - ii) Relatives and family friends refuse to cooperate with CP&P case planning efforts.
 - iii) Searches and exploration of all resources have resulted in an apparent absence of extended family members and family friends.
 - iv) Circumstances preclude the adolescent from returning to the person or persons with whom he or she resided at the time of receipt of a report, referral, or application for services.
 - v) No appropriate relative or family friend is able or willing to assume care of the adolescent.
 - vi) The adolescent rejects all other potential living arrangements.
- e) The adolescent is mature enough to take responsibility for him/herself.
- f) The adolescent needs continued support (financial, emotional, etc.) to reach the goal of independence.
- g) The adolescent received, or is participating in, life skills instruction.
- h) All other case goals are inappropriate.
- i) See [CP&P-VI-A-2-200](#), Independent Living Stipend for policy, procedures and social work intervention required for Independent Living for an adolescent age 16 or older. See definition in N.J.A.C.10:133-1.3.

G) Other Long-Term Specialized Care

- 1) For use in very rare cases for adolescents age 16 or older, this case goal is selected when case activities are directed toward the placement or maintenance of a child in a long term, specialized care living arrangement. Only select this goal when no appropriate family is able or willing to care for, and meet the needs of, a child with a serious medical, physical, emotional, or mental disability, and the child will remain institutionalized because no less restrictive living arrangement can meet his or her needs for care and treatment. This case goal may be established for those few children who meet all of the following criteria:
 - a) The child has a severe physical, mental, or developmental disability;
 - b) The child resides in a long-term care setting; and,
 - c) The case goals of Reunification, Adoption, Kinship Legal Guardianship, and Independent Living have been ruled out.

H) Individual Stabilization

- 1) Only use this case goal for:
 - a) Parent(s) whose children have all been placed out-of-home and the permanent plan for every child of that parent is other than Reunification.
 - b) Older adolescents (i.e., young adults), age 18 to 21, who are in, or will soon be transitioned into, an independent living program or setting, who agree to continue to receive services from CP&P, and for whom no other goal is appropriate. See [CP&P-III-A-1-500](#), Services to Adolescents Age 18 to 21

I) Establishing the Case Goal

1) Intervals

- a) The Division reviews the case goal of each child and each family member receiving services at regularly scheduled intervals, but no less frequently than:
 - i. Once every six months, at the request of a family member;
 - ii. Prior to the fifth month internal placement review;
 - iii. During the tenth month of placement, to prepare for the permanency hearing;
 - iv. When major changes in family circumstances occur (example: child is placed out of home) which might affect the case goal.
 1. Note: Whenever a case goal is established upon order of the court, the judge establishes the case goal.

2) Time Frames for Reaching the Case Goal

- a) The goals of Maintenance in Own Home/Family Stabilization, Reunification, KLG and Adoption should be accomplished within one year of the initial case plan or permanency hearing.

b) Choosing a Case Goal Through Case Assessment

- i) Determine the case goal during the intake/assessment process within sixty (60) calendar days of assignment of the CPS report or CWS referral from State Central Registry.
- ii) Concurrent Permanency Goal Required - For all children who enter placement with a primary goal of Reunification (i.e., return home), the assigned Worker immediately establishes a concurrent goal, and works simultaneously toward both Reunification and the alternate permanent plan for the child. See [CP&P-III-B-2-300](#) Concurrent Permanency Planning
- iii) Written Assessment - The assigned Worker completes a written summary using the NJS Case Plan Window, which pre-fills onto the [CP&P-III-B-2-300](#) Concurrent Permanency Planning
Written Assessment - The assigned Worker completes a written summary using the NJS Case Plan Window, which pre-fills onto the CP&P Form 26-81, Family Summary/Case Plan, indicating the case goal(s). Enter specific information about the family and family member relationships to the child. See [CP&P-III-C-6-100](#), Family Summary/Case Plan, indicating the case goal(s). Enter specific information about the family and family member relationships to the child. See [CP&P-III-C-6-100](#), Case Recording.
- iv) Case Goal Selection - The assigned Worker, the parent(s), the out-of-home placement provider (if any), the child (when appropriate), and any other individual who is an interested party in the safety and well-being of the child, are encouraged to participate in the development of the case goals.
 - 1. The Family Part of the Chancery Division of the Superior Court may establish one or more case goals by court order as a result of the Child Placement Review (CPR) process. See [CP&P-IV-A-3-200](#), Review of Children in Placement. If CP&P or the parent(s) disagrees with the CPR Board recommendations, request a Summary Hearing.
- v) Family Participation - The Worker strongly encourages the family to participate in the case planning and goal setting process. Family

engagement promotes appropriate case planning and the setting of the case goal(s), while maximizing opportunities for successful outcomes.

1. When domestic violence is alleged or present, family participation may be affected. See [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100](#), Domestic Violence, Section J, Decision Making, and Section K, Case Planning.
2. If the assigned Worker is not able to engage the family, a case goal may be established without the parent's, relative's, or family friend's participation. Casework Supervisor or Local Office Manager approval of the case goal is required when one or more of the following conditions are met:
3. The case goal is ordered by the court.
4. The child's safety, health, and/or development are endangered.
5. The child is at risk of harm.
6. The relative(s) and family friend(s) are unwilling or unable to participate in the process.
7. The child, if old enough, is unwilling or unable to participate in the process.
8. The assigned Worker, Supervisor, LO Manager or designee, Casework Supervisor, DAG and Child Placement Review Board agree that the parent(s), identified relative(s), and family friend(s) will not be able to meet the child's basic needs, even with available community and social service supports. Therefore, assessing these six basic areas of individual, family, and community functioning will determine the most appropriate case goal, including:
 - vi) Safety of the child;
 - vii) Risk of harm to the child;
 - viii) Health, development and educational needs of the child;
 - ix) Willingness of the parent(s), relative(s), or family friend(s) to provide care and protection;
 - x) Ability of the parent(s), relative(s), or family friend(s) to provide care and protection;
 - xi) Community and social service supports. See [CP&P-II-C-2-200](#), Intake Assessment.

c) Case Goals for Children With Repeated Placements

- i. In accordance with N.J.S.A. 30:4C-53.3(b), whenever a child is placed again after having returned home from placement, the Division prepares a repeated placement plan which ensures the goals of safety and permanency through either Reunification, Adoption, or KLG. If none of these goals are in the child's best interests, the Worker and Supervisor conference with the Casework Supervisor and Deputy Attorney General (DAG), to discuss:
 - 1. The facts supporting why Reunification, Adoption, or KLG are not in the child's best interests;
 - 2. The facts supporting how the new goal is in the child's best interests;
 - 3. Why the child was originally placed, the length of the original placement, as well as why he or she is now re-entering placement;
 - 4. What efforts were made by both CP&P and the parent(s) to correct or eliminate the problem;
 - 5. Whether continued efforts to work with the family will be successful within a reasonable time frame;
 - 6. What efforts were made by CP&P to search for and/or contact kin who were initially unavailable to care for the child, but whose circumstances may have changed.
 - i. If, after discussing the case and reviewing supporting documentation, the Casework Supervisor has determined that there is sufficient reason to believe that an alternative placement is more appropriate, the Casework Supervisor, Supervisor, and Worker develop a repeated placement plan for the child, which includes a permanency plan. See "Repeated Placement Plan" in CP&P-III B-1-100, Case Plan.
 - ii. The Worker documents the reasonable efforts to achieve that plan and the compelling reason for choosing an alternative permanent goal in the NJS Case Plan windows, to produce the CP&P [Form 26-81](#), Family Summary/Case Plan. The plan is prepared within 30 days after the child re-entered placement and is valid for twelve months.
 - iii. If the child has been in placement for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the Division must document an exception to the requirement to file for termination of parental rights.
- d) **Establishing Case Goals**

- i. A general goal toward which CP&P services and intervention are directed is determined and documented in the assessment at the time of initial service delivery, within sixty (60) calendar days of State Central Registry assigning the CPS report to the Local Office for investigation, or assigning the CWS referral to the Local Office for response.
- ii. Appropriate goals for all children and families served by CP&P are outlined above. Concurrent planning is required, and a secondary (concurrent) goal must be selected, whenever a child is placed out of home with a primary goal of "reunification." See [CP&P-III-B-2-300](#) Concurrent Permanency Planning

Policy History:

- 10.4.2021
- 12.6.2010